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Entrepreneurial Studies at Rider University



Alumni Newsletter

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Second Class Of Aspiring Entrepreneurs Complete Veteran Entrepreneurial Training Program

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Fifteen veterans, from all branches of the armed forces, completed the first phase of the 2015 veteran entrepreneurial training (VET) program at Rider. The free eight-week program combines classroom teaching with workshops and mentorship to help veterans pursue a venture concept. Last summer, veterans attended seven sessions of classroom training taught by Drs. Ron Cook and Lee Zane, along with two workshops on business research tools and accounting fundamentals.

“We learned from the first class of veterans in 2014 and for this year, have changed some aspects of the experience,” says Dr. Ron Cook, director of Rider’s Center for Entrepreneurial Studies. “We expanded

the classroom aspect of the program, and assured that each veteran has a formulated business concept in place from the very beginning of the program. We also brought the professional business mentors into the classroom in the beginning to review the concepts while they establish a relationship with the veterans from the start.”

When the classroom instruction is completed, each veteran’s mentor will work closely with them for a year as they finalize and implement their business plan. A panel of subject matter experts is also available to all veterans, who can answer technical questions on a variety of topics.

At the end of July, those veterans enjoyed a graduation ceremony and

celebration, which marked the completion of the first phase of the program.

Dr. Elad Granot, Dean of the College of Business Administration, told the vets that, “Tonight is a celebration – and you should all be extremely proud of your accomplishment, but your journey doesn’t end here.” “Continue learning, continue taking advantage of the knowledge and guidance your mentors can provide, and continue pursuing your dreams of running your own businesses.”

The 2015 program was supported by Grand Bank, N.A., of Hamilton, N.J., with a \$50,000 grant for the second year to continue this outstanding effort to support veterans.

Veteran Entrepreneurial Training program (cont.'d)

The New Jersey Bankers Education Fund, Inc. also contributed an additional \$5,000 to support the 2015 program.

At the ceremony, Russel Melville, Rider's director of Military and Veterans Affairs, added, "This is an outstanding opportunity and is

a wonderful way to thank veterans for all that they do for our country."



The Veterans Class of 2015, along with Rider staff and mentors.

Breaking News: Veteran Success!>

Michael Pollack, a graduate of Rider's 2014 Veteran Entrepreneurial Training Program, just got approved for a loan for his startup, The Salad Cart. Congratulations, Mike!

Center For Entrepreneurial Studies Conducts First Annual High School Business Concept Competition Held Last Summer

Area high school students competed in the end of July at Rider University in a contest sponsored by the Center for Entrepreneurial Studies. This first-ever 2015 High School Business Concept competition was designed to recognize exceptional

entrepreneurial skill and creativity among these students. Students were asked to submit a 300 word business description identifying a particular product or service, the intended audience, why this group would want this product or service and how the product or service

would be distributed.

Initial submissions were narrowed down, and the top finalists presented their concepts to a panel of judges consisting of



High School Competition (cont.'d)

entrepreneurs who are members of the Entrepreneurial Center's Advisory Board. The judges looked at the following factors: the clarity of the product or service description, specificity of audience and their interest in this concept, evidence that a market exists, and the feasibility of delivering the product or service.

This live final was conducted in a "shark tank-like" format with the students first explaining their ideas and then responding to the judges' questions.

Congratulations to the winners, listed below:

First place:

Elizabeth Christie, Bridgewater-Raritan High School, The Spill-Saver Game Tray

This project outlined a new way to carry belongings at baseball and football games. The plastic tray has a concave hole for beverages and is rectangular with dividers separating the food.

Second place:

Saikshaj Paturu, Bridgewater-Raritan High School, Q, a smartphone app

This project introduced a smartphone app that would help people know wait times at popular places or warn people about how crowded places are so that they could better plan their evenings.

Third place:

Kevin Hanie, Bridgewater-Raritan High School, Tutor Time

This project described a smartphone app that connects students to live tutors via Skype or Facetime, who will then assist the students by guiding them through their studies.

Fourth place:

Jeamy Nguyen, Cape May County Technical High School, The Shred Shed Skate Park & Shop

This is an indoor skate park/shop located in the Cape May New Jersey, where its target customer will be males aged 14-25 who are actively interested in skateboarding.



Winners sit with Rider staff and competition judges



1st Place: Elizabeth Christie, The Spill-Saver Game Tray, stands with Directors of Rider's Entrepreneurial Program Dr. Ronald Cook and Dr. Lee Zane

Alumni Update: Ari Bluestein, 2006; MBA 2007

Back in 2005, when I was a junior at Rider, I started my undergraduate degree in entrepreneurial studies with classes like Small Business Management. All the knowledge gained in these courses got my entrepreneurial juices going and I got the urge to start my own business.

Combining my love of sports and the rapid growth of social media websites like Facebook and MySpace, I came up with the idea for SportsFanBase.com - a website that would bring sports fans together from all over the world to interact, compete in contests and create passionate rants about hot topics in sports.

The idea was born but work still needed to be done. Thanks to Dr. Cook and Dr. Chaganti, I became enrolled in a new program called the Student Venture Experience (SVE). I spent an entire semester assembling a business plan for SportsFanBase.com and I was able to launch the website in 2006.

Over the next few years, my small business was not able to keep up with new technology and with the increasing number of social media and interactive sports websites, and years later, the website became outdated. However,

SportsFanBase.com would still end up as a successful business venture.

After the website was dormant for a couple years, a good friend and I re-launched the website as The Sports Fan Base Network (SFBN). Living in Philadelphia, we decided to focus on high school sports. High school sports were a huge part of the Philadelphia culture, yet there weren't many media outlets covering the games. So in August of 2012, SFBN started live streaming select games in the Philadelphia area.

Over a 2-year span, SFBN gained popularity among fans, players, coaches and school administrators. Slowly, SFBN became one of the top media outlets in Philadelphia to cover high school sports. During that time, Comcast Spectacor took notice and wanted to hire SFBN to produce a TV show discussing Philadelphia area high school sports.

Comcast and SFBN agreed to a 1-year, 20-episode contract in July 2014 to produce "SFBN Talks High School Sports" during the 2014-2015 school year. The show aired on The Comcast Network in the Philadelphia area and ran through June 2015.

After a successful first year, Comcast decided to renew SFBN's contract for the 2015-2016 school year. We are now in the midst of our second 1-year, 20-episode contract with Comcast. The show, now titled "Varsity Voice presented by SFBN" airs every other Wednesday at 6 and 10:30 PM on The Comcast Network.

It's amazing to think about where SFBN started - just an idea at Rider that has now become a growing sports network. SFBN, now in it's 4th season of operation, has grown every year since the beginning. Who knows what the future holds for SFBN, but reflecting on the past, I can't imagine where I would be today if it weren't for Rider, Dr. Cook, Dr. Chaganti and the Entrepreneurial Studies program getting me started in the right direction.



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A Mentor's Experience: Jennifer Gardella

As I look back on my emergence as a successful entrepreneur, I see that so many building blocks of my success lead back to Rider University. I never did attend as a student and never worked here full-time. So how is it

that this school played such a huge part in my journey to building my business?

First, let me explain my business. I am a social media consultant. My passion and mission is to help in-

dividuals, personalities, and big and small businesses build their digital footprint.



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Jennifer Gardella (cont.'d)

We work together to make sure that their message is clearly communicated through blogging and social media posting. I help them connect with customers, clients and power partners with a personalized strategy to build their accounts, on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and Google+. I also step in as their SEO consultant, helping them navigate their needs, contracts and understand what they really need. I speak regularly to networking groups and at conferences helping individuals and business untangle the rather complex world of social media.

How is it that Rider contributed to the amazing business and life I have built?

When I was a PhD student, I really wanted and needed to get some university teaching experience in the field of statistics and was given an opportunity to teach statistics to undergraduate students. It was here that I honed my expertise in breaking down complicated concepts into small pieces for greater understanding by others.

Several years later and through a completely unrelated connection, my social media expertise was brought to the doors of Ron Cook and his entrepreneurial program. A networking colleague asked me to help mentor her students as they worked on their final project. Situated in an actual company, they were preparing an overall social media marketing strategy. Even though these were young students well-versed in social media, they needed assistance understanding of how to use the platforms to attract clients. Their project was submitted to a national competition where it is in the national finals, with results to be announced in Feb. I then mentored another group this fall – you can watch one of our discussions here on YouTube

Ron Cook then invited me to be part of the Veteran's mentoring program, which has been a great honor. My significant other is a retired Navy Commander and I know how hard it can be to transition to civilian life, especially

with technology. Working with Veterans on their digital marketing is very rewarding. I am able to help them translate their expertise into civilian speak and bring a bit of understanding to their marketing systems. We talk about SEO, their website, blogging, and then how to position their endeavor on the social media platforms.

Starting a business is a very exciting undertaking. A key component of success is putting in place a support system with multiple prongs. For me, the ability to give back through the Rider community has been a very rewarding experience and a prong I have come to cherish. As they say with volunteer work...with the right experience, more will be returned to you.



Jennifer Gardella

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Alumni Update: Caroline Romanelli, 2013

I graduated from Rider in 2013 with a double major in Entrepreneurial Studies and Management and Leadership, with the intention to open up a small music venue hosting local bands. This ambition was further developed by participating in Dr. Cook's Student Consulting class, where I met a mentor: Helena

Bouchez. She has helped me tremendously in giving me the tools I needed to pursue my musical interests. I am eternally grateful to have had Helena's valuable advice and willingness to help me along my journey. But the journey wasn't an easy one; I applied to countless jobs and went on plenty of bogus interviews before I got to where I

needed to be. I sent my resume out to all the big music companies like Live Nation, Bowery Presents, and AEG, along with small music clubs and record labels. Then I realized, it's not what I know, it's whom I know.



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Caroline Romanelli (cont.'d)

That's when I started to focus getting a foot in the door in order to work my way up to where I want to be.

I joined a street team in NYC where I would hand out flyers before or after a show, promoting the company's upcoming shows in NYC. In return, I got two tickets to any of the company's upcoming shows. I was content with this form of compensation; however, the people in this company were very unorganized and rude. Nonetheless, I stuck with it throughout the summer and ended up getting some really valuable advice from an employee. She told me to manage a band and make some connections with venues. So that's exactly what I did.

I started managing my friend's band and emailed as many venues as I could think of. I was brainstorming

places to book the band when I remembered that I had a woman's business card from a show that I went to in New Brunswick the year before. I emailed her and got the band a spot on one of her shows at the Scarlet Pub in New Brunswick. A month later, they played the gig and absolutely nailed it. After the show, I met up with a friend who goes to Rutgers, and coincidentally, she knew the owner of the pub. She told me she wanted to introduce me to the boss because his promoter found a new job and he was looking for someone to replace her. And well, the rest is history.

Even though it took me a year to land this job, I feel like my journey has just begun, and networking is, and always will be, a huge part of it. I go to basement shows at least once a week to check out new bands and meet new people. I am always looking to book new

musicians to play at Scarlet Pub. I host Showcases featuring local bands every Sunday and Open Mic every Wednesday; you can find videos and a list of my upcoming events on [Facebook.com/Cromanellipresents](https://www.facebook.com/Cromanellipresents). The music scene is alive in New Brunswick, and I am extremely grateful to be a part of it. But I cannot do it alone; the music scene is as strong as you help make it. Rider was so important to my career, and not just for the contacts I made. I encourage everyone to think about networking.



STAY CONNECTED

Do you need entrepreneurship interns for your company and want to give Rider students that opportunity? We are always looking to help Rider students, so if you are aware of any internship openings, please let Dr. Cook (cookr@rider.edu) know.

Would your company benefit from being involved in the Small Business Institute® program? We are looking for firms to participate in our award-winning student consulting program. Contact Dr. Cook (cookr@rider.edu) for details.



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